

1 Samuel 17

Aim of Lesson

To show David's absolute faith in God's power to destroy Goliath.

Background study

Numbers 13:28 and 32-33; Joshua 11:21-22; Psalms 18 and 124; Ephesians 6:10-17. A cubit was at least 18 inches and a span 9 inches. Find information and pictures of the Philistine army, its weapons and armour.

Suggested outline of lesson

This story will undoubtedly have been heard before by most children of this age group, unless they are new to Sunday School. It is recommended that thought be given to presenting the story with a fresh approach. It may be effective to tell the story in the first person, from David's point of view. By this means his absolute confidence in God can be most powerfully conveyed. His was the clear-sighted faith of a young man who had committed himself totally to God from an early age.

Remind the children of his position in the family and his duties as a shepherd, of the dangers he had faced when alone on the hillside and of his close personal relationship with God, who had chosen him as future ruler of his people. At the time of this story David was probably under twenty and not old enough to be in Saul's army. Tell the children to imagine that David is telling them the story himself. Lead into this role play by using such phrases as: "I was looking after the sheep as usual for my father, when he asked me to pay a visit to my three eldest brothers who were at the battle-front in a war against the Philistines There they were, ranked on opposite sides of a valley ... A powerful voice could be heard echoing round the hills ..."

Stress the extraordinary size of Goliath, which filled everyone with awe, and the arrogant and scornful words of this enemy who considered himself invulnerable. How confident and complacent the Philistines felt to have Goliath as their challenger. How demoralized were the Israelites at having no comparable champion. As David arrived he sensed the fear which prevailed and was at a loss to understand it. He saw not an insuperable adversary, but a man who defied God. The matter was simple. He questioned the Israelite soldiers' reluctance and cowardice. Was not God on their side?

Point out the typical older brother's reaction - of superiority and disdain - compared with David's sincerity and his surprise at finding himself summoned to the king. He was not looking for glory, but was quietly confident that he could overcome the enemy through trusting in God's strength. Once more he met with a disdainful response, this time from the mighty Saul, who could see only the stark contrast between the warlike giant and the fresh-faced shepherd boy. David saw things in a different light. It was God who would fight the giant, not himself alone.

Saul's reaction to David's approach was first one of incredulity, then amusement, and finally admiration. He must have caught something of David's confidence. Because of the nature of the challenge, the lives of every one of them depended on David's success. Saul accepted the courageous offer, but was still thinking in purely human terms. The incident of the trying on of the armour is at once amusing and poignant. At this point the children will be ahead of you and should be allowed to participate in the narrative. The tension and suspense of the duel must be built up before the climax is reached. Make much of the contemptuous taunting of David by Goliath, his powerful stance and proud disdain, the sight of his armour and weapons contrasting with the simple tunic and primitive sling. David's physique, unencumbered, youthful and lithe, contrasted with that of the muscular armoured warrior. Goliath's threats and pagan curses offended David and roused a response in him. Loudly he proclaimed his confidence in the power of the God of Israel to deliver his people. With swift accuracy, and with but one stone, the foe was vanquished. And now the suspense and tension gave way to confusion and panic on the part of the Philistines and a triumphant charge by the Israelite army, leaving David standing over the beheaded enemy.

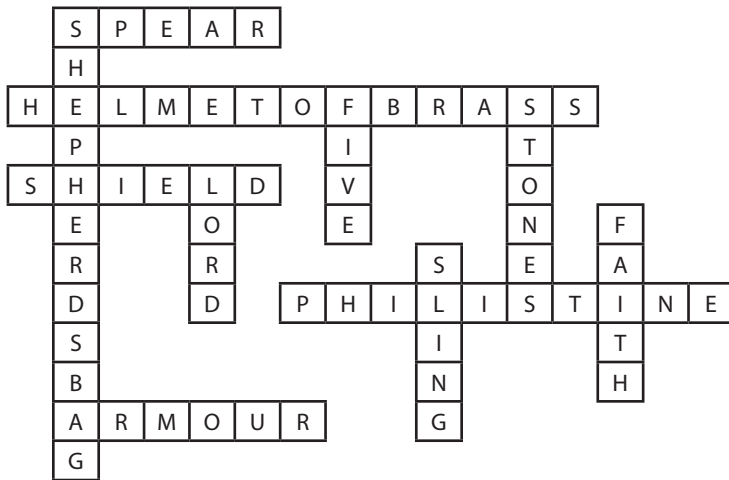
For those with suitable facilities, this story lends itself to dramatization. Children will readily paraphrase the dialogue in their own words and, in so doing, will reveal and reinforce their understanding of the faith of David.

Relevance to the children's lives

David faced up to a giant, and won. How was he able to win when the giant was stronger than he was? We may be young and small like David, and we sometimes face problems that seem like giants. How can we learn from David's example not to be afraid?

Worksheets

The words in the grid are:



Prayer

Dear Lord God, please help us to be as brave as David and to remember that we can win when we have to face problems, as long as we put our trust in you. Amen.

Memory verse

"You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Samuel 17:45).